

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 021303Z DEC 74

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 764

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 204

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: SECSTATE UNDER FIRE

1. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND MERLYN REES
SUBJECT CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM RECENTLY FROM SEVERAL QUARTERS.
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP) CHIEF WHIP PADDY DEVLIN
RELEASED TEXT 2000 WORD OPEN LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER WILSON
NOVEMBER 28. LETTER OUTLINES SERIES REES ACTS OR FAILURES
ACT BEGINNING WITH FAILURE HONOR LATE 1973 PRIVATE PLEDGE TO SDLP
TO RELEASE LARGE NUMBER DETAINEES EARLY 1974, THROUGH "BREATHTAKING
BLUNDERS AND UNPRECEDENTED BUNGLING" IN HANDLING ULSTER WORKERS
COUNCIL STRIKE MAY 1974, TO UNTRUE STATEMENTS CONCERNING NUMBERS
INJURED IN PRISON RIOTS. DEVLIN LETTER ALLUDES TO SUSPICION
REES UNDERMINED HEATH-WHITELAW PACKAGE IN FAVOR OF WILSON FORMULA
LEADING TO WITHDRAWAL. (LETTER FOLLOWS BY POUCH).

2. FATHER DENIS FAUL, DUNGANNON CLERIC AND CIVIL RIGHT
ACTIVIST ATTACKED REES DEC. 1 FOR "ALMOST COMPLETELY SECTARIAN
APPROACH TO INTERNMENT" IN REACTION TO 18 INTERIM CUSTODY
ORDERS SIGNED IN WAKE OF ARRESTS OVER WEEKEND. 16 OF
THESE INVOLVED ROMAN CATHOLICS AGAINST TWO PROTESTANTS. MOST
ARRESTS BELIEVED BE SUSPECTS SECTARIAN MURDERS.

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3. VANGUARD AND OFFICIAL UNIONISTS AND FAULKNER UNIONISTS

HAVE PROTESTED REES (AND WILLIAMS) REFERENCES AT BRITISH LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE TO POTENTIAL CIVIL WAR SITUATION SHOULD BRITAIN WITHDRAW. REES COMMENT THAT HE WOULD NOT LIKE BE RESPONSIBLE FOR LIVES ROMAN CATHOLIC POPULATION BELFAST IN CIVIL WAR SITUATION SEEN AS OFFENSIVE AS WILLIAMS REFERENCE TO POSSIBLE WIDENING RELIGIOUS WAR.

4. SDLP ANIMOSITY TOWARD REES GROWING SINCE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AND AS INCREASINGLY GLOOMY OUTLOOK REVEALED FOR PARTY IN FUTURE GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE. IT UNLIKELY ANY SINGLE INDIVIDUAL FROM WESTMINSTER COULD OVERCOME LOYALIST INTRANSIGENCE ABOUT EXECUTIVE POWER SHARING IN FACE CONTINUING IRA TERROR CAMPAIGN. HOWEVER SDLP AND PARTICULARLY DEVLIN BELIEVE SECRETARY STATE WITH STRONGER INDIVIDUAL POWER BASE, SUCH AS JENKINS, COULD DO MORE THAN REES. LOYALISTS ON OTHER SIDE GENERALLY BELIEVE REES SINCERE AND THAT HE BEST INFORMED AND MOST INTELLIGENT SECSTATE RECENT POST. HOWEVER THEY DISGRUNTLED BY WHAT THEY SEE AS FAVORITISM TO MINORITY COMMUNITY. LATEST REAL ISSUE FOR LOYALISTS IS SLOW RATE ACCEPTANCE BY STORMONT OF VOLUNTEERS TO ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY RESERVE AND ULSTER DEFENSE REGIMENT. APPLICANTS MOSTLY PROTESTANTS AND INCLUDE MANY VETERAN B SPECIALS. SPICER

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